

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The State of Michigan administers three adoption subsidy programs:

- Adoption Support Subsidy - Eligibility details for this program are defined in federal law (42 USC 673), Michigan law (MCL 400.115f-m.), and Department of Human Services (DHS) policy AAM 200. Funding for this program is through title IV-E and state funds.
- Nonrecurring Adoption Expenses Reimbursement - Eligibility details for this program are defined in federal law (42 USC 673), Michigan law (MCL 400.115f-m.) and DHS policy AAM 300 and 310. Funding for this program is through title IV-E funds.
- Adoption Medical Subsidy - Eligibility details for this program are defined in Michigan law (MCL 400.115f -m.) and DHS policy AAM 400. Funding for this program is through state funds.

Purpose

The purpose of subsidy programs is to provide financial support to families who adopt children from foster care through the public child welfare system. These are children who otherwise would grow up in state foster care systems if a suitable adoptive parent could not be found.

Based on each individual child's situation and needs, one or more of the adoption subsidy benefits may be available to support his/her adoption. Some children do not qualify for any adoption subsidy program based on their individual circumstances.

Eligibility for adoption subsidy programs is available without respect to the income of the adoptive parent(s).

Adoption Support Subsidy

The **adoption support subsidy** provides a monthly financial assistance benefit to the parent(s) of an eligible adopted child and is intended to assist with the payment of expenses of caring for the child; it is not intended to meet all of the costs of raising the child. Eligibility must be determined and a negotiated adoption assistance

agreement must be signed prior to the final order of adoption. After adoptive placement, adoptive parents assume financial, decision-making responsibility, and authority for the child.

Non-recurring Adoption Expenses Reimbursement

The adoption subsidy program may reimburse up to \$2,000 of **non-recurring expenses** related specifically to the adoption. Eligibility for reimbursement of allowable expenses is determined prior to the final order of adoption and an adoption assistance agreement must be signed prior to the final order of adoption.

Adoption Medical Subsidy

The **adoption medical subsidy** is a reimbursement program that assists in paying for medical or treatment costs for children adopted from the public child welfare system who have an identified physical, mental or emotional condition which existed, or the cause of which existed, before the adoption petition was filed. Routine expenses for typical childhood illnesses and over-the-counter medical supplies are not covered. Eligibility may be determined before and/or after the adoption but must be made prior to the child's 18th birthday. This subsidy is payment of last resort after all other medical coverage options are exhausted.

Program Administration

The DHS Adoption Subsidy Office in central office administers these programs. The department makes decisions regarding eligibility for all Michigan adoption subsidy programs and reimbursements.

Agency Responsibilities

For children in the public child welfare system, the placement agency foster care provider (PAFC), the private contracted adoption agency, DHS or the Department of Community Health (DCH) unit that has responsibility for the care and supervision of the child is responsible for:

- Informing the prospective adoptive parent(s) about Michigan's adoption subsidy programs
- Providing the prospective adoptive parent(s) with the DHS Publication 538, Michigan's Adoption Subsidy Program.
- Discussing the application process with the prospective adoptive parent(s).
- Submitting the application for adoption support subsidy/non-recurring adoption expenses and medical subsidy on behalf of the child and prospective adoptive parent(s) who have signed the DHS-4081, Intent Statement, requesting a determination of eligibility.
- Informing the prospective adoptive parent(s) of the Adoption Subsidy Office's determination of the child's eligibility/ineligibility for the subsidy programs.
- Negotiating an appropriate adoption support subsidy rate if the child has been determined eligible for adoption support subsidy.
- Handling subsidy applications, agreements and claims within designated time frames.

Notification of Subsidy Benefits

Once a child is certified eligible for adoption support subsidy, nonrecurring adoption expenses and/or medical subsidy, the adoption worker must inform prospective adoptive parents of the availability of subsidy benefits for the child. The adoption worker will negotiate the rate on the agreement with the adoptive parent(s), not to exceed the amount entered on the agreement by the Adoption Subsidy Office.

International Adoptions

Adoption subsidy programs are intended to support permanency for children with special needs adopted from foster care through the public child welfare system. As a result, the statutory requirements for eligibility reflect the needs of children in public child welfare systems and are difficult to apply to children who are adopted from abroad. Therefore, although statute does not categorically exclude these children from participation in adoption subsidy programs, it is

highly improbable that children who are adopted abroad by U.S. citizens, or are brought into the U.S. from another country for the purpose of adoption, will meet the eligibility criteria in federal and state law.

Non-Michigan Wards

If another state has responsibility for placement and care of a ward, that state is responsible for determining the child's eligibility, entering into an adoption assistance agreement and paying any assistance or qualifying nonrecurring adoption expenses reimbursement, even if the child is placed in an adoptive home in another state.

Title IV-E prohibits the payment of title IV-E adoption assistance on behalf of an applicable child who is not a citizen or resident of the United States (U.S.) and was either adopted outside the U.S. or brought to the U.S. for the purpose of being adopted.

DHS Publication- 538

State law requires DHS to publish and distribute a pamphlet on adoption subsidy programs. The DHS Pub-538, Michigan Adoption Subsidy Programs - Information for Prospective Adoptive Parents brochure, is available through the Forms and Mail Management (FMM) Unit of DHS. Publication 538 is also available online in the Adoption category from the DHS public web site: www.michigan.gov/dhs-publications.

State law requires this pamphlet be provided to prospective adoptive parents of children who are under the care and supervision of DHS prior to their adoptive placement. However, if Michigan does not have responsibility for placement and care, or is otherwise unaware of the adoption of a potential special needs child, it is incumbent upon the adoptive family to request adoption subsidy on behalf of the child. It is not the responsibility of the state to seek out and inform individuals who are unknown to the department about the possibility of adoption subsidy for special needs children who are not under the supervision of the department. This policy is consistent with the intent and purpose of the statute to promote the adoption of special needs children who are in the public foster care system.

Appeals

The state is required to inform prospective adoptive parents in writing at the time of the application and at the time of any action affecting their claim, of the right to request an administrative hearing. The method of obtaining a hearing and the right to represent themselves or be represented by another person such as an attorney, relative, friend, or other spokesperson must be provided in the information.